

CONSTITUTION OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE

- I. The formation of a National Committee flows from the political position on Quebec adopted by the last bi-national Convention, (September 1970) and has the purpose of:
 - a) expressing concretely and organizationally our total identification with the struggle for an independent Quebec, and of making the participation of the Quebec Trotskyist forces in the struggle for an independent and socialist Quebec more effective and complete. This is to be accomplished through the development of a self-sustaining Quebec leadership, which meets regularly to discuss political questions and to organize the work;
 - b) building the basis of a structure which reflects our development as a Quebec movement, with branches and members-at-large.
 - c) allowing the whole pan-Canadian movement to reinforce its capacity to coordinate bi-national campaigns.
2. What is the National Committee?
 - a) The Quebec National Committee of the LSO/LSA is composed of all the Quebec members of the Central Committee elected by the delegates at the bi-national convention of the LSA/LSO, the alternates to the Central Committee being alternates to the National Committee with the right to speak but not vote.
 - b) The National Committee (NC) must assign a national secretary, and any other necessary personnel, in order to assure the setting up and proper functioning of a national office. This is for the purpose of accumulating and allocating human and material resources, to facilitate the development of a movement which includes all the Trotskyists throughout Quebec.
 - c) To this end the National Office must be assured of a financial base.
 - d) The NC will meet at least once every two months. The exact date of the meeting, if it is not determined at the previous meeting of the NC, must be decided upon and announced by the National Secretary.
3. The responsibilities of the National Committee:
 - a) The NC is in charge of applying to Quebec the line as elaborated by the previous pan-Canadian convention of the LSA/LSO and developed between the conventions under the direction of the Central Committee.
 - b) To this end, the NC has the right to call national conventions when it deems necessary, i.e. at least once a year.
 - c) In the case of national campaigns and actions, the NC is in charge of coordinating and organizing the branches and Quebec members-at-large, in the framework of the authority and the decisions of the Central Committee.
 - d) Any regional organizer or other personnel outside the individual branches is subject to the authority of the NC including the editors of our publications in Quebec and their editorial committees.

- e) All the aspects of the press in Quebec are directed by the NC subject to the authority of the Central Committee.
- f) One-half of the dues of all the members in Quebec whether members of branches or members-at-large, goes to the financing of the National Office. In addition, the NC has the right to organize fund drives or other means of raising money subject to the agreement of the Central Committee.
- g) The National Office must take care of the correspondence, written and financial, and of the general liaison with Quebec members-at-large. The NC has the authority to recruit Quebec members-at-large and of transferring a member of a branch to the status of member-at-large or to another branch inside Quebec.
- h) The NC is in charge of calling and organizing national educational conferences and in general of directing the educational work in Quebec.
- i) This constitution is not in any way in conflict with that of the LSO/LSA and can only be amended or modified by the Central Committee of the LSA/LSO.

(Adopted at the meeting of the Political Committee, Feb.14,1971)

Excerpts from Election Policy in 1948 by James P. Cannon.
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Lessons from the Bolsheviks

The Bolsheviks, who were our teachers, were very adept at maneuvers. But as Trotsky explained in his great work -- The Criticism of the Draft Program -- the Bolsheviks didn't begin with maneuvers; they began with intransigence, with granite hardness, and educated their cadres so that they grew up to the ability to carry out maneuvers without losing themselves in them. This great work of Trotsky's was directed against the Stalinists, who had taken out of Leninism its maneuverist tactic at the expense of principled firmness. But the Bolsheviks never tried to solve fundamental problems -- that is to say, problems of class antagonisms -- by means of maneuvers. That cannot be done. We know where these maneuvers of the Stalinists, which violated class principles, finally landed them.

The maneuvers of the Bolsheviks were always within class lines. I don't know of any effort made by the Bolsheviks to maneuver within the parties of the bourgeoisie. On the contrary their whole tactical line, maneuverist as it was, was to make a sharp cleavage between the working class organizations and those of the bourgeoisie. What was the meaning of the great slogan, "All Power to the Soviets"? What was the meaning of the slogan, "Down with the Ten Capitalist Ministers"? Or later Trotsky's slogan for France: "A Blum-Cachin Government!" And still later the slogan: "A CP-SP-CGT Government!" They were all class slogans designed to split the workers' parties entirely away from all collaboration with bourgeois politicians.

What was the meaning of Trotsky's irreconcilable struggle against the people's front combinations? Here in one "people's front" was the whole working class of France -- the Stalinists, the Socialists, the trade unions, and they included even the anarcho-syndicalists, plus the bourgeois party of the "Radical Socialists." Trotsky said, "All very fine except for one spoonful of tar that spoils the whole barrel of honey. The bourgeois party. Break with them and make a united front of workers' organizations." He took the same position on Spain. What does all this rich instruction mean for us, translated into American terms? The very least it means is this: If our teachers opposed any collaboration with any section of the bourgeoisie even for single actions, they would most certainly reject such collaboration in a common party.

Here, as in Europe, the Stalinist policy is not the workers' united front, and not a labor party in the sense that we understand it, to develop the independent class action of the workers. It is people's front combinations for pressure on the bourgeoisie for momentary concessions to the Soviet bureaucracy at the expense of the class interests of the workers. We have to fight that and by no means join it or take such a position where we could be considered as giving

partial support. We are against bourgeois parties from A to Z.

I understand some comrades were not satisfied with the explanation I made in my presentation as to what a bourgeois party is and how the class character of a party is determined. I said, it is not determined by the class which supports the party at the moment, but rather by the class which the party supports; that is to say, by its program. That is the basic meaning of a political program, the support on one class rule or another. The class character of a party is also determined by its actual practice. We would not take the formal program of any party by itself, separated from its daily policy and practice, as the sole criterion. Another factor to be considered is the composition of a party. A bourgeois party of the classical type is easily recognized because it has all three of these qualities -- it is bourgeois in program, in practice, and in composition.

The British Labor Party

But then the question is raised -- the fact that the question is raised shows some confusion on the question of the labor party -- comrades ask: "Well, what is the British Labor Party?" If we judge it by composition alone, we must say it is a "workers' party" for it is squarely based on the trade union movement of Great Britain. But this designation "workers' party" must be put in quotation marks as soon as we examine the program and practice of the party. To be sure, the formal program and the holiday speeches of the leaders mutter something about socialism, but in practice the British Labor Party is the governing party of British imperialism. It is the strongest pillar holding up this shaky edifice. That makes it a bourgeois party in the essence of the matter, doesn't it? And since 1914, haven't we always considered the Social Democratic parties of Europe as bourgeois parties? And haven't we characterized Stalinism as an agency of world imperialism?

Our fundamental attitude towards such parties is the same as our attitude toward a bourgeois party of the classical type -- that is an attitude of irreconcilable opposition. But the composition of such parties gives them a certain distinctive character which enables, and even requires, us to make a different tactical approach to them. If they are composed of workers, and even more, if they are based on the trade unions and subject to their control, we offer to make a united front with them for a concrete struggle against the capitalists, or even join with them under certain conditions, with the aim of promoting our program of "class against class." We try to push them into class actions against the bourgeoisie. But we do not paint them as genuine organs of the working class in the political sense. That would be a great mistake. It is especially important for us to keep these considerations clearly in mind with the perspective of an American labor party.

If there is one thing that is fairly certain, it is that the trade unions in this country will be obliged to go into politics on their own account, and most likely they will first experiment with a labor party. We may be confronted, in the first stage of this great development, with the attempt to form a labor party of the British type. It is by no means excluded that the present

bureaucracy, or another, more adept at demagoguery but no less conservative in practice, could form and head such a party at its inception.

If our members are led to think that a labor party per se is the goal of our endeavors, then our party can easily lapse into reformism and lose its reason for existence. No, we must define our attitude precisely in advance of such a possible development and permit no misunderstanding. We would oppose such a "bourgeois workers' party" as ruthlessly as any other bourgeois party, but our tactical approach would be different. We would most likely join such a party -- if we have strength in the unions they couldn't keep us out -- and under certain conditions we would give its candidates critical support in the elections. But "critical support" of a reformist labor party must be correctly understood. It does not mean reconciliation with reformism. Critical support means opposition. It does not mean support with criticism in quotation marks, but rather criticism with support in quotation marks.

It would be a good thing to read over again Lenin's advice to the British communists back in 1920. He explained that they ought to support the labor party candidates for Parliament. But he said "Support them in order to force them to take office so that the masses will learn by experience the futility and treachery of their program, and get through with them." It was not solidarity with the labor reformists but hostility which dictated the tactic that Lenin recommended. I think his advice still holds good. The labor party is not our party and will not be our party unless it adopts our program. Otherwise it is an arena in which we work for our program.

And if we take such a critical and hostile attitude toward a "genuine" reformist labor party, one based on the unions and controlled by the unions, what attitude should we take towards this Wallace-Stalinist set-up? That is not the beginning, or the promise, or even the pretense of being a labor party. There is no ground to give it any kind of support, "critical" or otherwise.

The Danger of Disorientation

The comrades have emphasized that they do not advocate the politics of the "lesser evil," and I do not mean to say that they do. But that is the possible implication of their position. And what is only implied in the position of party leaders can be taken literally and exaggerated by the party ranks. That is what we are worried about. The carefully guarded formulations of the Chicago leaders can be "freely translated" to authorize such concessions for participation in this movement, that party members can lose their bearings and a Wallaceite wing make its appearance in the Socialist Workers Party. I would consider that the greatest disgrace -- and the greatest loss. All the little temporary advantages you might gain by supporting the Wallace formation would weigh like a feather in the scale against the loss

of a few score of new members who, instead of becoming Bolsheviks, are turned into confused Wallaceites. There is the danger of disorienting our ranks by maneuvering around with this movement.

It has been argued here that "we must go through the experiences with the workers." That is a very good formula, provided you do not make it universal. We go with the workers only through those experiences which have a class nature. We go with them through the experiences of strikes, even though we may think a given strike untimely. We may even go with the workers through the experience of putting a reformist labor party in office, provided it is a real labor party and subject to certain pressures of the workers, in order that they may learn from their experience that reformism is not the correct program for the working class.

But we do not go through the experience of class collaboration with the workers. There we draw the line. We did not go through the experience of the workers when they supported the imperialist war. We drew back when they went through the experience of people's fronts in Europe. We stood on the side and we told them they were wrong. We did not compromise ourselves. If another man takes poison, you do not have to join him in the experiment. Just tell him it is no good. But don't offer to prove it by your personal example.